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by the officials of the governing body, or *Università*. This body, which met in Mdina, the old capital of the island, was composed of representatives of the nobles, learned men, secular priests, merchants and artisans elected by all the family heads in the towns and villages of Malta and Gozo. The Knights of St. John, however, severely limited the authority of the Università, and during their final years it was little more than a public corporation responsible for the importation of scarce foodstuffs.

The Order made itself responsible for local government. It controlled and financed the local militia, police, courts, water supply, public works, hospitals and charities. The government of the Order was highly centralized, and all key posts were held by Knights, though many of the lesser administrative offices were given to Maltese nobles, lawyers and clerks. The authority of the Order was made effective in the rural areas through the police and the ten Captains who were in charge of military garrisons and arsenals, located at strategic points for internal security and defence against war parties and corsairs, and were also responsible for mobilizing the militia. This paternalistic system of administration came to an abrupt end when Napoleon drove the Knights from the islands. Their departure marked the end of an era.

Napoleon remained in Malta only eight days, but they were busy days. According to Laferla, 'it is certain that no one in the space of a few days attempted more, did more and upset the Maltese more than he did.'[1] He set up a nominated council of Maltese to see to civil administration, remodelled the tribunals along French lines and established twelve municipal councils. He abolished the nobility. He closed the University, established a central technical college and founded fifteen government elementary schools. He also sent sixty sons of wealthy families off to study at republican colleges in Paris at their parents' expense.

'All this and probably much more would the Maltese have patiently tolerated,' says Laferla, 'had Napoleon not interfered with religion.'[2] For he set out to curtail the influence of the Church. He limited the jurisdiction of the Bishop to purely ecclesiastical affairs, ordered the expulsion from the islands of all non-Maltese clergy and reduced the number of clerics. He also instituted civil marriage, gave protection to the Jews and forbade

[1] A. V. Laferla, *The Story of Men in Malta* (3rd ed.; Malta: A. C. Aquilina and Co., 1958), p. 144.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

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CHAPTER II

The National Organizations: State, Church and Political Party

Generally speaking, the activities of government are carried out by a number of departments and boards, each of which is under the control of a director or chairman. Each of these, in turn, is usually responsible to an elected Cabinet Minister. But under the interim constitutional arrangements which followed the resignation from office of the Labour Party in 1958, Department Heads were responsible to a British Chief Secretary and his assistants. Under each Department Head are ranked the various grades of civil servants. These run from the Executive and Clerical Officers through non-pensionable clerk-typists, fatiguemen and industrial labourers. Altogether, some 17,000 persons work for the government. They represent 19 per cent of the total labour force. This makes the Malta Government the largest employer on the islands. Entrance to all but the lowest grades, and promotion between the principal grades within the civil service, are by means of open competitive examinations.

Malta's small size has facilitated the centralized administration required of an island fortress. As already observed, there are no councillors, headmen or mayors, either elected or hereditary, to represent the interests of the villagers to the government or convey the wishes and commands of government to the people. Virtually all the machinery and personnel of government are located in Valletta. Only the police represent government authority in all villages. There are government elementary schools for boys and girls in all villages and almost all hamlets. Now most villages also have a dispensary which is open for a few hours a day under the supervision of a government District Medical Officer and a nurse. There are a few regional post offices and branches of the Department of Emigration, Welfare and Labour. All other public services, such as street sanitation, sewerage (where it exists), water, electricity, repair of roads and so on, which in

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in-nies il-kbar, 'the big heads'. But if asked, a person will often deny that such persons exist, and reply, 'Here we are all the same; we are all from the village'.

II

The authority of the State is represented by the police, who are formally responsible for law and order. Each village has a police station manned by a small contingent of constables under a sergeant. Several villages make up a police district under an inspector. In Malta most policemen live outside the villages in which they work. But it is usual for Gozitan constables stationed in Malta to be quartered in the police stations to which they are assigned.

In addition to their official duties of law enforcement, the police distribute voting certificates, help conduct censuses and give out the allotments of free food to old age pensioners and people on relief.[1] They also perform many favours for local residents. They help people fill out government forms, and occasionally allow the station telephone to be used for private calls. They are sometimes able to mediate in local disputes. Disputants very often report each other for insults, threats or some minor infraction of the law – throwing waste water and rubbish in the street is one of the most common – thus hoping to strangle their enemies in its due process. The police constable on duty is often able to reconcile the disputants and persuade them to withdraw the charges and counter-charges.

In general, the punitive role that the police are occasionally forced to play is offset by their role as distributors of government assistance and by their general helpfulness. District inspectors try to avoid personal relations with the people in their districts since they must prosecute all criminal cases, and personal ties might prove awkward. Sergeants and constables, on the other hand, normally maintain friendly social contact with the local inhabitants. They are often invited for drinks during feasts and weddings, and quite a number marry local girls. The Maltese police thus play

[1] The government has distributed surplus U.S. agricultural products to different groups of needy people since 1956. This food was first secured through the Co-operative for American Relief to Everywhere, Inc. (C.A.R.E., Inc.) and more recently through the Catholic Relief Services of America. The Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare, not the police, selects the beneficiaries.

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a very different role from that of their Spanish counterparts, the Civil Guard, whom Kenny describes as 'the traditional enemy of the peasants'.[1]

III

The very considerable authority of the Church in Malta is derived not from law, but from the loyalty of a people who fervently practise their religion. Until recently, there had never been a separation in their minds between Church and State, between the religious and secular elements in their daily lives. The Church, as we have already observed, has occupied this position for many centuries. Its power is bolstered by its considerable wealth, for in Malta the rich property and lands of the Church have not been expropriated by the State, as they have in so many other Catholic countries.[2]

As the official representative of the Church, the parish priest occupies a position of great importance in his community. He has authority in all religious matters affecting his parishioners. He ministers to their spiritual and often to their personal needs. He alone can arrange for the important ceremonies which mark the stages in their lives. These *rites de passage* include baptism, confirmation, marriage, death and burial. He also controls the many ritual activities of the village as a whole. These are the daily services of worship and the ceremonies, processions and feasts by which all Maltese, but above all the countrymen, regulate their days and mark the divisions of the year. Through his preaching and admonition he defines, interprets and enforces the moral code of the Church. He is also the official custodian of the richly decorated parish church.

Besides this dependence on the parish priest in the religious matters which are of such vital importance in the lives of a devoutly Catholic people, the country people have traditionally looked to him for assistance in many secular fields. Until only a few decades ago, he was often one of the few literate persons in his parish. As such he was frequently asked to read and write letters.

[1] Op. cit., p. 48.

[2] Mitchell estimates that the Church owns 22 per cent of the agricultural land in Malta and 12 per cent in Gozo. See Peter K. Mitchell, *The Maltese Farm*, vol. II of *Studies in the Agrarian Geography of Malta* (mimeographed; Dept. of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1959), p. 130.

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of government. While the parish priest in Malta is the official village representative of the Church and has authority to act for it on most matters, the police represent only the law enforcement function of government; all other functions and services of government are administered from Valletta. In this respect the villages of Malta are unique.

On the other hand, there is a relation between social status and the functional requirements of the authority system. In any given community, the people with the highest status usually fill the most important offices, since such offices require the standing, skills and contacts which they possess. There is thus a rough grading of office holders in terms of their social status and the authority and prestige attached to their offices. Upward mobility through this structure is usually dependent upon factors such as education and occupation rather than on having held other, and less important, offices. Once a person has become the president of his local band club, in other words has attained the highest secular office in the village, and has a social status which commands respect outside, he may be elected to political office.

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578 Curia trying to persuade all concerned, from the Bishop down, to
621 think the way they do. This may go on for years, for the Curia,
793 knowing the trouble that lies ahead, is usually in no hurry to give
794 its decision. When the final decision is handed down, it is usually favourable, and the design for a set of flowers less beautiful and costly than the corresponding set of the titular partit is furnished. The secondary partit then instructs the craftsmen to begin work. The titular partit announces to everyone that it will cancel its next feast.

It often happens, however, that just before the new bouquets (or whatever *objets d'art* are concerned) are inaugurated during the secondary festa, the parish priest discovers that most of the Curia's specifications have been ignored. The new flowers are far more beautiful than they were supposed to be. He is furious. The guilty leaders of the secondary partit apologize profusely and take immediate steps to make them less beautiful. Occasionally, the priest may discipline the partit by temporarily reducing the scale of its feast. The secondary partit then holds its feast, and the flowers are admired by all visitors. Strong police reinforcements usually prevent trouble from occurring. Relations between the parish priest and the titular partit are gradually re-established and it agrees, usually for some concessions on his part, to celebrate its feast again. But in a year or so, a new dispute occurs, and the process starts all over again.

578 Sometimes relations between a parish priest and a partit reach
621 a deadlock that can be broken only by an outside peacemaker,
625 frequently an officer of the police. The police in any case have a
793 vital interest in the degree of rivalry existing in the villages, as it is
794 their business to keep order during the feast. The number of police on duty at these times ranges from a dozen or so in villages such as Siġġiewi and Naxxar, where there are no partiti, to around 100 in those where there are strong ones, such as Mqabba and Żurrieq. Occasionally a parish priest is threatened, frightened by a home-made bomb, or attacked; he then often requests, and generally receives, a transfer to another parish.

543 So far only the more important encounters between partiti have
575 been discussed. There are many other events to keep their rivalry
578 alive throughout the year. The numerous fund-raising fairs of
621 the band clubs are occasions for the village to divide along festa partit lines. While supporters of the partit running the fair flock

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already noted, in Malta, it is a criminal offence to insult a minister of religion. There were no other disturbances.

The Labour rally was rather a different story. The leader of the MLP and the thousands of his supporters who came to Kortin to hear him speak received a decidedly hostile reception. Though Dun Bert did not organize a counter-demonstration for the occasion, he did arrange a mass protest meeting the evening before. The following day rival groups were out decorating. A number of MUSEUM lads under the direction of one of the older members pasted anti-MLP slogans all over the façade of the church. At the same time, a group of men were busy hanging posters and flags from the Labour club to welcome Dom Mintoff to the village.

At 4 p.m. buses and cars began to stream into the village with thousands of MLP supporters from all over the island. At about the same time the church bells began to call the faithful to a religious procession in honour of Our Lady of Fatima which Dun Bert had scheduled to take place during the Labour meeting. He himself stood in the square watching the faithful gather in the church. He also carefully observed those who passed by on their way to the Labour meeting, which was being held right behind the church. Most of the villagers who sympathized with the Labour Party but who did not support it openly did not attend the meeting. They were anxious to avoid the open break with the rest of the community which attending would have entailed. Besides, several mentioned that their confessors had told them that they would commit a mortal sin if they attended MLP meetings. All the open supporters of the MLP in the village went to the meeting.

The meeting began at about 4.30 p.m. and lasted for two hours. Shortly after it had started, Dun Bert's procession of nearly a thousand men, women and children slowly wound its way through the village and returned to the church for a period of prayer and worship. When the Labour meeting finally broke up, most of the outside supporters departed quickly, though a number were delayed because villagers had deflated the tyres of about a dozen of their cars. At this time people also began to leave the church. But the police, who were trying to keep a passage clear in the centre of the square for the stream of departing Labour supporters, kept them on the steps of the church. They waited there for a while and then began singing hymns and songs in honour of

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the Pope and the Archbishop, stopping now and then to shout insults at the passing Labour supporters. The square on the other side of the police cordon began to fill up with people returning from the meeting and others who left their houses to see what the excitement was about. Gradually the songs became louder and more excited, and the shouts hoarser. By then it was getting quite dark, but I could see Dun Mikiel in the front row, his hands thrust tensely into the pockets of his cassock, scowling at the passers-by while he smoked cigarette after cigarette. The tension by this time was almost electric. Suddenly, one of the local MLP supporters returning to the Labour club replied to a taunt by making a threatening gesture. The crowd in front of the church booed him loudly and surged forward. The police, anxious to hurry the trouble-maker off the square, pushed him a bit too hard and he stumbled and fell. This angered the crowd on the other side of the square and it began to press through the police cordon. At this point police reinforcements arrived and cleared the square in a few moments. Their prompt action prevented an ugly situation from going further, for there had been well over a thousand angry people facing each other, separated by less than two dozen unarmed policemen.

Four days after the meeting, Dun Bert organized a pilgrimage of reparation to atone for the insults of the MLP speakers. The procession of some 1,200 people reciting the Rosary escorted the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows through the area behind the church where the Labour meeting had been held. About 400 of the participants were outsiders who had come to Kortin from other parts of the island for the occasion. After the procession the crowd gathered in front of the church where a Mass was said. A noted Jesuit orator then rebutted the MLP speeches point by point. The whole affair had almost passed off without incident when a number of stones and bottles were thrown from behind walls at the buses and cars leaving the village.

But if there are relatively few face-to-face meetings of this kind in Kortin or elsewhere, there are many disputes that divide and weaken the clubs and associations. This matter has particularly affected Sur Gorg, the president of the Social Club, who feels responsible for preserving its unity in these difficult times. In Kelinu's, where many of the influential regulars are members of the Social Club, they say that it has become a Mintoff stronghold.